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Body Marking/Body Mapping: Embodied Difference and Strategies of De/construction of Identity

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Introduction

My research project, of which this paper constitutes a partial, limited and in progress overview, sets out to investigate the complex web of relations, connections and possible alliances between the marked/mapped body and strategies of de/construction of identity. What I am investigating, in other words, are the links between body marking, and in particular self body marking, and the way in which identities are built, organised, represented and dissolved. It is a case of proceeding "backwards", as my personal interest, fascination and experience of body marking are literally leading me to the exploration of more and more remote and apparently not connected philosophical and intellectual territories. The realisation that questions and issues related to practises of bodily inscription not only are far denser in their implications than imagined, but also that they play a crucial role in shaping cultures and their epistemological roots, constitutes an intellectual challenge and thus the propulsive force that animates this research. Better start then by formulating some of the questions which will guide me in my investigating attempts of charting the volatile connections between body and identity.

What happens when the corporeality is permanently altered? What are the implications of permanent body marking on the construction of subjectivity, that is, on the definition of boundaries? And what are the implications of self marking? How do we have to intend subjectivity and identity when we are facing practises of "otherization", that is, permanent mimicry, self induced embodied difference, becoming something else? How are identities socially

and culturally constructed on the basis of the material variety of bodies? What are the technologies that act on the body base matter for this purpose and how do they work? How can it be possible to manipulate, together with flesh and blood, these same technologies, so as to divert them from the establishment of the self as opposed to the other (path of identity/sameness), and to transform them instead into powerful and efficient tools for imaging, creating and practising a different experience of the other-than, "other-else", one which will not be based on dyadic structure? Furthermore, what are going to be the stories and even the personal narratives that these permanently marked bodies can and are willing to tell us?

Body and identity seem to be the core issues of the contemporary cultural landscape. Both seem in fact to be facing a crisis of signification which refers unavoidably to the increased fuzziness of their boundaries of meaning. Both body and identity are being repeatedly questioned at their very roots in what can be considered an epistemological crisis around the very parameters onto which their definitions are based.

In fact, crisis, breaking, unexpected trafficking of meaning between de/constructed identities and de/composed bodies, invasions, mutual overlappings and lines of flight and diversion, are all concerned with the hot issue of borders: every crisis of signification is first and foremost a crisis of boundaries, a crisis *of* the way in which boundaries are defined, represented and perceived. There is no much doubt about the fact that contemporary events and theories conspire restlessly to deliberately make uncertain and blurred the border which separates (and unites) the body and everything that is not-body, as well as identity and everything that is not-identity.

As for the body, it seems obvious that the contamination between flesh and a surplus of technological and scientifically advanced implements is questioning and confusing a prompt definition of its boundaries, making almost impossible the task of knowing where the body ends and where "the body-else" starts. In tum, this confusion affects the very epistemological fundamentals of every body knowledge, as crisis of boundaries do by showing the arbitrariness of de-finitions so far assumed as the "right" or the "natural" ones. The impossible task of defining boundaries brings forth the beautiful realisation that boundaries are for their very own nature transitory, fluctuating, mobile, volatile, liquid.

As the purpose of this paper is the investigation of the connections and the

alignments between identity and corporeality, I will focus on the territory where they seem to meet and overlap: here I will situate the interrogations on how it is possible to imagine different modalities along which to build a cartography of boundary-land, a cartography able to translate and respect the liquidity of this territory in terms non binary and explicitly non innocent. By concentrating on the interstitial space, on the liminal territory where body and identity clash and merge, penetrating each other with relentless flooding, I intend to transform the exploration of the space-in-between into the intellectual and practical task of imagining possible and different ways of thinking, of seeing, of producing realities and wor(l)ds.

Some theoretical tools offer space of experimentation towards this intellectual task, and I will briefly introduce them. They will work as sort of rough guidelines, temporary frameworks, as outlined by a finger trace in the sand and rhythmically susceptible to be transformed again into writing surface by the waves of change. However, I will first pay respect to those to whom I am most indebted: the anomalous voices of my favourite advisers.

1. Anomalous Voices on the Body (Spinoza, Nietzsche, Foucault, Deleuze)

The voices I will refer to and whose sound echoes obviously throughout my work seem somehow to be linked by an invisible thread, unfolding from Spinoza to Deleuze, touching Nietzsche and Foucault: voices critical of the hidden world of interiority, celebratory of life affirming forces, of movement, change and desire, voices raised against the sacred principle of identity and the illusion of representation, against authority. Anomalous voices, nomadic thought.

"Nomad thought replaces the closed equation of representation, $X=X=not\ Y\ (I=I=not\ you)$ with an open equation: $+y+z+a+(\dots)$. Rather than analysing the world into discrete components, reducing their manyness to the One of identity, and ordering them by rank, it sums up a set of disparate circumstances in a shattering blow"

B.Massumi

These, together with radical women's voices, among whom Haraway, Grosz, Irigaray and Braidotti, constitute the pool of my intermittent and always fructuous dives and plunges. I will fly down on them to steal what most shines to my ravenous eyes, and assemble concepts and images to think about known-

realities in not-yet known manners, in a magic tool box with which to dismantle structures, unhinge junctions, open up engines, and then reassemble random parts according to other, personal, chaotic and corporeal lines of flight. It has been suggested by Spinoza's commentators the image of a body that burns like a flame², an image that makes me think of a continuous and furious process of transformation, thus against the suggested permanence and re/production of a state of being, as in the Cartesian metaphor of the body as machine. Spinoza's body is a non-mechanicistic, non dualistic and anti-essentialist one, a fundamentally creative and proactive entity, impossible to cage into a definition because it is never identical to itself, but always in continuous becoming. In this sense Spinoza's position challenges the principle of identity as dependent on the idea of self-resemblance, and suggests instead the multiple modes in which bodies interact with other bodies to form identities never given and formulated once for all.

From Nietzsche I take the idea of the body as the agent and the active source of production of knowledge, resulting from the body's ceaseless activity of expansion, from its constant tension to becoming "else" from its pulsions toward survival, affirmation and move beyond its very own self. This is a body perpetually traversed by chaotic forces, active and reactive, and whose intensities are always unpredictable.

"In this sense, Nietzsche's conception directly inherits the tradition propounded by Spinoza in his assertion that we do not know, cannot know, what the body is capable of doing or achieving. For Nietzsche, as for Spinoza, the body's capacity for becoming cannot be known in advance, cannot be charted; its limits cannot be definitely listed. The body itself, in its microforces, is always in a position of self-overcoming, of expanding its capacities"

E.Grosz³

There are two relevant ideas here: one is the body as producer of knowledge and consciousness (thus rooting every production in body matter), and the other is the constant body's expansion and tension to overcome itself in an act of self-creation.

Body states, physiological processes and all the specificity of embodiment are sources of production of consequent epistemological and ontological positions. Knowledge, power, morals, laws, philosophy, language, are all by-products of

the body's frantic pulsing. Even language shares this origin: words are nothing but double metaphors, metaphors of images which in turn are metaphors of states of the body.

I like the idea of rooting philosophy into practices of the body (for Nietzsche dance is the most appropriate way of philosophising) because it opens up to the consequent *situatedness* of produced knowledge.

A knowledge able to recognise its origins and to trace its genealogy to and from the body will also be able to acknowledge its localisation and the position of power taken not simply by whom is producing knowledge but most of all by what is considered to be knowledge in certain contexts (agency and accountability). Such a knowledge will also be able to evaluate positively its links with corporeality and to avoid the minefields of extreme relativism or functionalism by exhausting in the surface all the possible *realities* instead of postulating a secret meaning to dig out and to analyse.

The very same body which is the source of knowledge and the subject/object of disciplinary power is also the place where change can happen whenever corporeality is altered, whenever habits are changed. In R.Diprose's reading of Nietzsche⁴ the nodal point that makes this possible is the production of a space in-between from where to operate the movement of change, a space between self and self-project as projected-self, a space where to let be the forces of change and self creation. By acting throughout this gap, which allows view of the self from a distance, the self can constantly reinvent itself according to a self given masterplan, therefore never being identical to itself.

Such forces of self creation resist the political tendencies to conform, be homogenised, to be always identical to yourself. Change, with its corollary of unpredictability, scares the given structure of a society, of a system of thinking, of an economical unit of re/production of self, like a dyad..). Change, when it does not conform to pre-organised and safe paths, is a destabilising force-event, as it threatens the very ordered structures which control, use, and instigate only certain types of policed change. Of course, the margins of what is allowed and prohibited are very mixed up and fuzzy. In fact it is not even a case of prohibitions or concessions: power-knowledge regimes work much more subtly throughout the contemporary self-policing technologies of self-control which move from the easy assumption that "you can become what you want to become"

I think this is the logic behind several discourses of "empowerment" I came across recently regarding practises which involve the body (notably, sex related

professions like lap dancing, stripping, prostitution). Or again, in relation to plastic and cosmetic surgery: the language used in the small ads in the back of magazines like *Cosmopolitan* or *Vogue* is all centred on the right/duty to self improvement through bodily intervention. Here some examples: *"Help change the way you look change the way you feel ..."* *"Cosmetic surgery: Your body, your choice..."*, *"We believe everyone has the right to feel good about themselves"*, *"Cosmetic surgery. When it's time to leave your old self behind"*

This "empowerment" rhetoric does more than enthusing over personal self creation, it bears the insidious dangers of misleading it along the guidelines of a safe and homogenised change, which means of course controlled and controllable, void of unpredictable swerves, of dark zones, of explorations of borderline territory. This rhetoric allows and proposes an access to becoming only by few selected technologies, by few selected vectors, curiously all functional to the re/production of well identifiable body images, sexual roles, and generally, by locating the change in a replication of identity according to a set of pre-packaged identities ready to wear. The threats that this rhetoric sets out to avoid are those contained within practises that go in the direction of creating difference in the world by body marking and body inscription⁵.

In fact, creating difference within a project of self creation has something to do with working (on) body matter. It has as well something to do, I believe, with repetitive practises, with repetition.

Difference and transformation, the process of becoming something else, is always "the result of many and infinite repetitions"⁶

The repetition of gesture, of movement, of body postures produces what we call habit, and it is the sum of habits that create our own knowledge of the world, or what accounts for what we know. Again, the body is a re/source. Here is where I locate myself in space/time, where I depart from and where I return to; here is my favourite dwelling: my habitat; here is the position I take, the stance I assume: my ethic⁷

The connection emerging here is between a creation of conscious difference and embodiment, between body, difference, repetition and change. This is a set of ideas that seems indeed made to measure to eviscerate the many fleshy facets of self marking.

More specifically referring to the body capacity to bear inscriptions, Nietzsche talks about the role played by pain, physical pain, in the institution of social and political discourses. He elaborates the notion of mnemotechnics, technologies that use pain to induce the body to retain memory of events, and thus of laws,

norms, power regimes. Pain and memory are in fact strictly connected: by punishment that afflicts directly the body, human beings retain the memory of the laws they must obey. Ethics and moral laws are impressed in the subject by violent practises: an history of moral laws is therefore a history of types of body coercion and manipulation. Similarly, justice and its administration come from an elaboration of primitive forms of intervention on the body.

Blood and flesh are the very material junctures where history coalesces into formations, structures, nodes, from which in turn every kind and degree of knowledge is bound to develop. What accounts for "progress" and "civilisation" is more the sequencing of these clusters of events and the way they are etched into bodies, rather than having to do with the light of reason and the guidance of logic.

What is important to ask at this point is how these technologies that act on the body have developed, how they work on the contemporary body, what form and direction they have assumed, and what forces or resistance they encounter in their work. We turn then to Foucault to become better equipped in this task⁸

Foucault developed the analysis of the relations between bodies, power and knowledge, as well as the idea of genealogy which undoubtedly is another very precious investigative tool to apply to extra-ordinary corporeality.

Genealogy is a method that analyses the present by tracking down all the discontinuous and disparate elements that shaped it, and in particular those epistemological guidelines that governed them. A primary concern of a genealogical method is to avow and to question the very backbone of dominant systems of thinking, the very scaffolding on which estates of thoughts are built: I can imagine a sand-papering job rubbing away the epistemological structures that define the meaningfulness of historically determined events.

This method is not concerned with ideologies, with the epic of origins or the teleological progression of events, nor with their cause-effect relations. Instead, it is concerned with the modalities in which history interacts with and affects bodies, marking them, carving them, moulding their pliable matter to fit its directories. Genealogy thus concerns the relations between bodies, knowledge and the production of knowledge, between bodies and epistemologies, it concerns the ways in which knowledges are extracted from bodies, and how these and others knowledges come back to impress their mark on the body and to orientate its doing. This perspective looks therefore at bodies as the surface of inscription where events leave their trail: a genealogy will let emerge a body totally marked by history, pushing forth and letting emerge the technologies

and modalities in which this happens.

Foucault's body is the instrument as well as the ultimate object of power exercise. With its flesh constantly penetrated by power-knowledge regimes which shape it as well as producing it, it is a body definitely less active than Nietzsche's, as it seems to be the battleground where power, knowledge, resistance and pleasure fight each other for control.

What within the body can resist does not come from the consciousness of being human, rather, it is the very materiality of the body whose forces of resistance can be mobilised according to different strategies and scopes.

If power represents the condition under which knowledges acquire the status of truth, we have to look at how the complexity of power-knowledge regimes work the body- knowledge is in fact the privileged vehicle of access to forms of body control. Bodies produce the information necessary for the power to control them, in an endless spiral of power-knowledge-pleasure.

The emerging body is moulded by several, interconnected regimes; broken down by the imposed rhythms of work (in all its declinations: flexible workplace, immaterial production, postfordism ...) as well as by the imposed rhythms of organised entertainment, leisure time; power relations produce bodies by specific technologies that, from the cradle to the grave, harness bodies' own energies of free expenditure, excess and desire in order to make docile, obedient, disciplined bodies, bodies functional to the re/production of the system and its costly maintenance, bodies as inter-exchangeable parts of agglomerates of cog wheels which not only demand efficiency, productivity and compliance to corporate regulations, but that also institutionalise and overview all the "free" expressions of subjectivity.

What I intend to use from Foucault's work is the idea of concentrating on the very materiality of the processes of construction of bodies and on the technologies used for this purpose, and of doing so by using the method of genealogy. It will surely be useful and insightful when applied to the analysis of the modalities of construction of different bodies, of monstrous bodies, of extraordinary bodies.

Deleuze and Guattari can be considered the most contemporary heirs of Spinoza⁹ Their joint philosophical project contains crucial insights, suggestions and lines of investigation that I take on board as one of the most relevant sources of inspiration and guidance. Such a project points resolutely to the elaboration of alternative paradigms of thinking, of a radical ontological reconfiguration that by problematising the assumed notions of identity,

subjectivity and corporeality intends to challenge the undisputed centrality of the subject, the coherence of signification, the curse of the binary.

Central to Deleuze's work is the idea of difference and the way this is developed and reconceptualised (beyond or below) the dominant regime of the one and the same, the imaginary regime of the double and the representation, the regime of what Deleuze calls "State philosophy" authoritarian thought based upon the principle of identity.

State philosophy, pervasive in the history of western culture, is just another name given to every fundamentally reactive and reactionary system of thought opposed to vital and life affirming pulsions; subordinated to the idea of self resemblance; intolerant to diversity, and always elaborating new ways of suppressing and controlling difference, of systematically forcing it into definitions and regimented structures of meaning, to better assimilate it, absorb it, digest it, and expel it.

A different mode of intending difference must fight against the great illusions of representation, those strategies of identification, resemblance, opposition and analogy that erase, negate, reduce and harness the force of difference, and hide behind a veil the thought's own potential of producing worlds¹⁰ Deleuze considers difference as a force in itself, in-subordinated and always stranger to identity, not reducible to a formal category of thought. Upon this idea of difference he builds an altogether different way of philosophising by producing a self-defined nomadic and rhizomatic thought, one that embraces and rides difference. This is a philosophy not seeking for a universal truth but rather functioning like a tool box: by stressing the operativity of conceptual resources, of what a thought can do, create, produce, it is enlightened the importance of linkages and conjunctions, of assemblages and alliances over the separated realms of subject and object.

In fact, in Deleuze's language there are not subjects, objects, beings: instead, we find planes, intensities, fluxes, becomings, alliances, linkages, and all sort of volatile junctures among them, alliances of intensities, movements, forces, energies, events, bodies, animate or inanimate, as well as the fundamental concepts of rhizome, machine, desire, multiplicity, and most relevant for my research, the concept of body without organs.

Subject and object cease to be the discrete entities or the opposite polarities, or even the holistic totalities of previous philosophies emerging from the impasse of the "or...or...", the lines of demarcation between one and the other are let to become more and more blurred, confused, liquid. Subject and object are better

described in terms of fluxes, energies, movements, speeds, intensities, and all their multiple, unpredictable, machinic connections, their heterogeneous, disparate, discontinuous linkages.

A machine is the modality according to which a body links up with others, and it is defined by the active relations with other practises, other machines, other bodies. A machine is devoid of any internal hierarchy or organisation, being rather a temporary assemblage of elements and their fragments, in constant dynamic changing.

If there is a rule a machinic connection will follow, it has to be that one of a constant experimentation and metamorphoses. A machine will thus be the result as well as the condition of an infinite process of creation. Machines are practical arrangements of desire: condition, context and consequence of every production, of every doing. Desiring machines are a particular kind of machines: they do not represent reality, they produce it; their function is not signifying, it is desiring. In fact, desire is the condition for the production of reality, for the creation of worlds. This is a very positive, affirmative concept of desire, as what makes things, changes and becomings possible. In this sense Deleuze is radically antipodean to a psychoanalytic idea of desire as lack, as the absence to be filled by yearning towards an impossible to obtain object of desire. Deleuze frees desire from the sticky trappings of fantasies and roots it back into reality, subtracting it from the frustrating nostalgia of lack and redefining it as series of practises that create reality. Desire as actualisation then, but not in relation to an object of desire: rather, what desire constantly tends to is its own self expansion, its own self-proliferation. Such a desire will therefore be unpredictable, nomadic, impermanent, creative, anti-teleological, and chaotic. This idea of desire seems to me to be crucial for the understanding of practises of self body differentiation: by allowing us to rethink the relations between subjectivity and corporeality in a different manner, untainted by the chronicization of dyadic structure, it actually lets loose all the players that make any becoming possible and focuses upon their unstable and sparkling connections, upon their surface rubbing and friction, upon their irradiating, multiple and messy gatherings. It will prove a precious ally in exploring the unexplorable fields of what triggers one to alter his/her very own corporeality, in attempting a description of acts of self-creation governed by nothing less, nothing more than choice and, precisely, desire, and finally, in suggesting possible links between the always excessive maps that desire traces on bodies and on the space between bodies, and the even more excessive marks that its realisation

leaves on their skin.

Deleuze's body is very close to Spinoza's: the body as what the body can do, body as the configuration of all its potentials linkages with others, of all the transformations it can undergo, of all its machinic connections. This is a body that rejects the static role of vessel for the soul, or the placement as an organic mechanism: devoid of internal hierarchy and structure, this is rather an assemblage of parts, organs, passions, actions, pulsions, desires, processes, whose trails it is possible to read in relief inscribed on their very surfaces. Such a body is against the idea of organism, that is interdependent parts working according to a superior order that legitimates and give meaning to their individual functions. Thus the idea (from Antonin Artaud) of the Body Without Organs, as denaturalised flux of energies, as surfaces traversed by forces, speeds and intensities, prior to their stratification¹¹

To organicism the Body Without Organs opposes disarticulation, the perpetual opening of the body to a multiplicity of connections; to signification and interpretation it opposes experiment; to subjectivity it opposes nomadic fluxes of intensities; to history it opposes becoming. The Body Without Organs is the field of immanence of desire, the place of actualisation of desire, where desire makes possible destratification and dissolution of identity. Such a process must always be carried out with extreme caution and care, though: the risk implied in a too extreme and fast destratification are high, and ultimately suicidal. It is advisable to maintain a certain degree of identity, a kind of home-base from which to depart and set out to fly. This of course cautions against the easy assumption of the rhetoric "become what you want to become", we have seen earlier.

2. Theoretical Tools

1. Standpoint of Material Variety

Let us first of all delineate the standpoint of the entire research. As we define corporeality as the material component of subjectivity it appears clear how and from which standpoint we are going to proceed if we want to rethink the epistemological fundamentals of identity. Our standpoint will be that of the material variety of the body, because it is precisely in the matter-of-factness of bodies that lies the possibility of transformation, of bodies and identities¹². This perspective focuses on the body as the emergence of a localised event, the intersection of multiple forces and trajectories, the temporalised aggregation

and affiliation of base matter. And it is precisely on this base matter that is known to take place the interplay of power, knowledges, resistance and difference, the regimes whose forces shape, and in turn are shaped by, the conditions of the experience of embodiment. In this sense there is no such thing as a generic, given body: every-body is a specific, albeit fluid and unstable, material composition bearing the marks of the differential degrees according to which different variables (of culture, history, society, gender, race etc.) interact and interplay.

It is of crucial importance to the scope of this work to emphasise the fact that only by concentrating on body's materiality will it be possible to avoid the impasse and the pitfalls implicit in considering the body as metaphor, as abstract text to interpret and decode. Instead, this perspective, thanks to its fruitful openings to the specificity of the experience of embodiment and its dynamic linkages with other experiences of embodiment, brings fully view the specific characteristics of incorporation as fundamental theoretical resources.

It is necessary at this point to mention what is commonly known as *Queer Theory*. Literally the word *queer* means different from what is expected, and it is also a term defining same-sex inclinations, and it has been reclaimed as an emblem of pride and celebration, like other terms (for example, *freak*). Queer Theory, consistently and radically adverse to every form of binary thinking and expression offers a "perspective for rethinking feminist body theory_ and developing an alternative politics of the body. It offers a way of celebrating a politics of creative subversion without retreating to identity politics or the tactics of collective rebellion which belonged to body/politics in the 1970s. Post becomes aestheticized and, unsurprisingly, the body takes on a central role in the transgressive aesthetic of performance and display."¹³

By rooting the production of theory into the specificity of one's embodiment it is possible to explore a new way of thinking, one that is embodied and as such has to negotiate, often in drastically unorthodox terms, practice and theory, as well as, of course, the often neglected question of the researcher's own body. In fact, it is a theoretical as well as a practical challenge: a matter of attempting to bridge body theories and body practices, by working on the relations between semiotic and material, between representation and incorporation.¹⁴

I intend to suggest that such points of contact between semiotic and material, between representation and incorporation can be found to manifest themselves more evidently anytime and anywhere we make a conscious effort to imagine

and to experience different bodies, or body difference. As for imagining differently, let's start by recognising the power of figuration in creating worlds.

2.2. Power of Figuration

"Figurations are performative images that can be inhabited. Verbal or visual, figurations can be condensed maps of contestable worlds. All language, including mathematics, is figurative, that is, made of tropes, constituted by bumps that make us swerve from literal-mindedness. I emphasize figuration to make explicit and inescapable the tropic quality of all material-semiotic processes..."

D. Haraway¹⁵

Maps for the understanding of the worlds, figurations are in fact narratives or building bricks that for us, inhabitants of the western world, are rooted in typical modes of representation of Christian culture, in particular to those well-known and powerful stories of origins and end, salvation and sufferings.

To acknowledge the power of figurations in shaping worlds (and bodies) is to understand that their performative power is fundamentally detoured by two intertwined factors: visibility and incorporation.

As it should be clear by now, both visibility and incorporation, as well as their "impossible" to describe material manifestation, are important parts and resources in this work. I will concentrate on them as the first step in the task of producing alternative images for creating the world. Such a task introduces necessarily another crucial point related to the elaboration of figuration, that is the acknowledgement of its non-innocence and the awareness that the production of what we can call "figuration zones" must be politically motivated in its aim to produce difference. I find suggestive and useful at this point Donna Haraway's definition of diffraction as "*the optical metaphor for the effort to make a difference in the world*"¹⁶

This image refers beautifully to the awareness necessary to make difference in the material-semiotic apparatuses which organise and create realities by diffractions, interferences, multiple printings on our own skins.

My aim is to explore some manifestations of the material variety of bodies and the way they are experienced and represented (extraordinary bodies by birth and by choice)¹⁷, and from this standpoint of incorporation, to go on to suggest different narratives and figurations to think subjectivity, identity and bodies.

In this purpose I am not alone, as I place myself in the trail of those who have

produced and used new images to think with. Here are a few examples of my favourite anomalous voices and their visions: Nietzsche's superman, Deleuze's Body Without Organs, Irigaray's mechanics of fluids, Braidotti's nomadic subject, Haraway's cyborg, Serres's parasite, Caillois's insect mimicry is In fact, I am indebted to those above (as well as to many others) in this philosophising of mine which, aimed as it is to a proactive stance against the stale crystallisation of identity, and rooted as it is in the materiality of the body, cannot fail to offer the contribution of an intensely lived and politically motivated dif/figuration. the self-made freak.

Figurations already existing and others still to be invented are an excellent way to rethink the relations between self and other, to produce knowledges which are double tied with the incorporation from which they emanate. In such localised specifications of bodies is incarnated a difference which is at the same time the only guarantee of radical transformation.

And this is the challenge taken on board by many feminist scholars, notably Irigaray, Braidotti and Haraway, philosophers who work steadily to produce new modalities of thinking the categories that hold the definitions of gender, identity, knowledge, power. In particular, Donna Haraway uses the powerful image of the cyborg as the embodied figure of the contamination between human and machine, as well as a material-semiotic trope from which to develop a different, new, non-dyadic epistemology, one to reject and bypass the sterile dialectics of self vs. other than self.

Against dualism she says:

"Bodies are maps of power and identity. Cyborgs are not exception. A cyborg body is not innocent; it was not born in a garden; it does not seek unitary identity and so generate antagonistic dualisms without end or until the world ends); it takes irony for granted. One is too few, and two is only one of the possibilities"

D.Haraway¹⁹

Again the question of boundaries. I follow Haraway affirmation that "we are responsible for boundaries; we are they"²⁰

The question of the boundaries is linked with the production of knowledge, or better with what accounts for knowledge in certain contexts: new ways of thinking (and thinking identity) imply new ways of imagining boundaries. Haraway elaborates the idea of situated knowledge, as a powerful tool to map the world, to produce knowledges that are always partial, localised and always

marked, as opposed to the idea of a given, impartial, universal truth, valid incontestably for everybody. Rather, situated knowledge emphasises the crucial role of embodiment in producing knowledge while denouncing the arbitrariness of scientific objectivity.

In this sense corporeality has to be taken not as a fixed or reified state, but rather like the fluid materiality where inscribed biopolitical markings can become the conscious maps of a new breed of understanding and thinking, by a new approach to the way in which they are seen and they see.

The idea of situated knowledge is relevant to my research insofar it focuses on the material experience of incorporated consciousness: it seems to me that it manages to avoid the traps of an extreme relativism, precisely by stressing the degree of awareness required to transform marked matter into meaningful maps. In this sense we can say that situated knowledges are always double marked: once by biopolitical powers and once by a re-marking of their co-ordinates according to a politically motivated project that dismantles structures and procedures of construction.

This approach produces an epistemology based on a localisation of the experience and of its incorporation, it manages to bypass both the pitfalls of a constructionist approach and its relativism, and the absolutism of essentialism, that erases the specificity of the singular experience. With situated knowledge the emphasis is on the position taken on the world: embodiment as ethics.

2.3. Body as Open Dissipative System

"Why should our bodies end at the skin?"

D.Haraway²¹

By thinking of the body as an open dissipative system we refer to scientific models that describe the chaotic behaviour of dynamic and non linear systems, such as the Catastrophe Theory²². The appropriation and use of scientific language, imaginary and paradigms is a well rehearsed intellectual approach which has proven to be immensely pro-active in terms of rethinking the very roots of knowledge, as well as dense of theoretical openings and implications, as the work of many philosophers, from Irigaray's mechanics of fluids to Haraway's cyborgness, demonstrates²³

In this context it is relevant to stress the paradigmatic shift from a reductionist, linear science that envisions closed and static systems, to a new model that

postulates instead open and dynamic systems, whose only apparent stability derives from the continuous and unpredictable interplay of continuity and differentiation²⁴ Matter is thus defined by a multiplicity of infinite specifications, instead of being considered homogeneous, organised and internally hierarchised. In open systems energies circulate and leak constantly, making it impossible to distinguish structurally between state and form.

Therefore, the image of a dissipative system can be used to think of a self whose energies and potentialities fluctuate freely in all directions.

What are the implications of using this model in a meta-physics whose aim is to rethink the links between body and identity?

First of all it means to move from an idea of the body as an organic structure, made by interdependent components which work together to keep the unity of the system and obey laws of proportions. This is the classic idea of the body as a closed and impermeable unity, the "well-shaped man" of the Vitruvian Polykleitan canon illustrated by Leonardo's famous diagram of a human body inscribed in a circle and square (dated around 1485-90)²⁵ a body in fact always depicted void of visible orifices, which, as we will see later, is not just a coincidence. From this ideal body, the standard whole against which to measure every occurring variation, we shift to a body made by the continuous movements of matter, aligning and realigning with other fluctuating aggregations, a body seen as a provisional, specific and always localised combination of forces, emerging from the interplay of differentiation and continuity that "both fuses body into matter and diffuses matter into bodies"²⁶

Secondly, this model makes clear the impossibility of pinpointing the edges of the system. boundaries become blurred and fuzzy as the form ceases to be fixed and stable to become a temporary alliance of otherwise unstoppable fluxes. Such a system applied to the body induces a shift from an idea of a body as a closed, self sufficient container, where things get in and other things get out, to a complete remapping of its own edges and meaning.

As Christine Battersby points out:

"The boundary of my body should rather be thought of as an event-horizon, in which one form (myself) meets its potentiality for transforming itself into another form or forms (the not-self). such a body-boundary neither entails containment of internal forces nor repulsion of/protection against external forces"

C.Battersby²⁷

Such a body does not end at the skin, and the skin itself is no longer a barrier between "inside" and "outside", nor the text where to read the supposed externalisation of the ego and its attempt to protect and defend itself from external attacks and threats to its own established identity. The very idea of self as opposed to other is questioned fundamentally, and it is precisely within this liquid area where body and identity meet and get confused that I intend to work and further investigate.

The implications of this model in a rethinking of identity are interesting and invaluable. In fact, a body whose constitution is not organic is a body where everything we can call a-functional and excessive thrives and develops, is a body that refuses to sacrifice its own unreducibility to the crystallisation of an ego-shrine, is a body thus reclaiming its own unrepeatability.

I find particularly useful for the development of this research to emphasise the implications of an emergence of the a-functional in relation to the gratuitousness and the exquisite superfluousness of the practise of body marking, excessive to the bare necessities of a re/productive economy of the body. Body marking thrives on excess and gratuity, it goes against the ideal, linear and organic body by dwelling within the interstitial territory where the grotesque and the monstrous belong, the third unnominable, the one beyond definition, the opening to the world and to the other. It works on vision and visibility²⁸, forcing us-viewers to assume a different way of confronting ourselves and our static perspective linear vision with an embodied difference that defies expectations and forces us to look at the space in between.

As well as linking of course the excess indefinable area with the grotesque, monstrous body.

2.4. Body as Surface

The anomalous voices of philosophers I turn to have something in common. instead of underlining the primacy of the subject and his/her conscience and its postulate of a body reduced to apparatus of extemation of a secret, dark, deep and hidden interiority, they rather choose the standpoint of the materiality of the body and the way in which the body itself hosts site to the interplay between historically contextualised power/knowledge regimes and localised technologies of self.

This perspective opens up the view of the body as a surface²⁹ as well as of a subjectivity conceivable not by means of plunging the depth of latency and

lack, but rather by tracing the unstable and complex map of its surface. Rethinking the relation between inside and outside requires different models of visualising it, and first of all models which embody not necessarily a binary one. I can imagine an embodiment, a visual concretization of a process, as opposed to a binary paradigm which represents, and is ontologically the construction of, a state, thus fixed and categorical.

The philosopher Elizabeth Grosz draws from Lacan the model of the Moebius strip, the inverted three dimensional figure eight, and places it in the context, relevant to my research, of rethinking the relations between body and mind, and, by extension, between self and other, identity and otherness, and the epistemological foundations of a binarised conceptualisation of reality. She says:

"This model also provides a way of problematizing and rethinking the relations between the inside and the outside of the subject, its psychical interior and its corporeal exterior, by showing not their fundamental identity or reducibility but the torsion of the one into the other, the passage, vector, or uncontrollable drift of the inside into the outside and the outside into the inside."

E. Grosz³⁰

There is quality of movement, transformation, a quality of becoming that is, at once, epistemological shift and condition and of its embodiment.

Thus, the body is explored as multistratified surface, folded onto itself and relentlessly unfolding, a surface in perpetual becoming, onto which the power inscribes laws, norms, interdiction, needs, desires (but not *desire* and etches in the raw matter subjectivities functional to the re/production of the system, inelligible, manipulable, in what can be described as an operation of social plastic surgery that reshape the flesh to extract socially determined bodies and subjectivities shaped to perform preorganised narratives, embodiments of forms of representation that Donna Haraway calls "sea of powerful stories"³¹ And if it is true that we are possessed by such stories, is there a way of re-writing them, or writing some new ones altogether? In other words, how could we reappropriate the very creative gesture that inscribe our bodies? how could our bodies be possessed by other, deliberately chosen, politically motivated marked/mapped stories?

Perhaps an answer lies in a perspective that sees the body-surface as a means to operationalise the figuration and its power: literally going beyond (or better, elsewhere...) the metaphor of the body as white page to be written, or as tabula rasa to etch, or as text to which assign a meaning.

To make a figuration operative it means to leave the idea of the body as text to read, decode, dissect, analyse, while taking on board the sentient, sensual body too. Thus, instead of using a representation that suggests and implies the separation between an "inside", place of depth, latency and need, and an "outside", place of their external manifestation that have to be interpreted, we concentrate on a body as series of surfaces, energies, forces, relentlessly unfolding and connecting with other surfaces, energies, forces and bodies, animated or inanimate, a discontinuous series of organs, processes, fluxes and matter. The body emerging from such a vision is made by its linkages with other bodies, and not by the hidden interiority of a symbolic body always standing for something else, always pointing towards some "bodyelse" constantly out of reach, constantly in need of being revealed.

This is a body-force which feels and has to be felt too as a requisite for a different kind of scholarship, what the ethnographer Paul Stoller calls *sensuous scholarship*³² able to acknowledge the body as space of mutual fertilisation between an inner vision that has become pure poetry embodied into the flesh and the politics of conscious differentiation.

3. Extra-Ordinary Bodies

Armed with all the above tools, weapons and advice I move on to measure such a tool box with my site of research: extra-ordinary embodiment.

A particular brand of material variety of body, extra-ordinary bodies are those who, literally, go beyond the ordinary, what is taken to be the "ordinary"³³ Extra-ordinary bodies. bodies whose material base is the ground on which strategies of construction of otherness are played; bodies whose otherness is determined by the confluence of variables which codify the raw body matter, give it a meaning (and a name), and produce modes of historically determined representation. Extra-ordinary bodies are always a cultural construction, they are the territory where narrative of bodily difference intersect strategies of production of identity, they are the place where the unavoidable visibility becomes the emblematic clue to reveal the way in which forces, power, knowledge conspire to construct the extra-ordinary body as such.

A classic device to produce otherness is the use and superimposition of a binary paradigm that codifies every difference as a deviance from a norm, the norm being the ordinary body, the un-marked, invisible one, the body that inhabits the space given as neutral of normality, and that thanks to the authority connected

with such privileged, albeit self defined position, has the power to impose a definition of otherness. Such un-marked position emerges only when and *if* we consider the processes of construction of otherness on the ground of its material embodiment, which due to its unavoidable visibility, play the unwilling part of neutralising as well as legitimising the normative body³⁴

3.1. Notes for an Extra-Ordinary Genealogy

Extra-ordinary bodies have always been around. What has changed *in* the course of history is rather the denominations used to define and pigeon-hole their irreducible bodily otherness. In fact what ancient Greeks and Romans called *monster*, for Mr PT Barnum was a *freak*, and in our politically hyper-correct culture is the *congenitally disabled body*

These are definitions, and as such they can be dismantled, broken down to reveal the processes behind them, the strategies that from matter lead to naming and back again, from de-finition (as ex-termination) to politics of segregation, otherization etc.

The etymology of the word monster gives an indication of the meaning conferred on these bodies: from the Latin *monstrare*, to show, to demonstrate, or from *monere*, which means to warn, it is immediately clear the profound, connaturated ambivalence of the monstrous body. Divine prodigy, sign of wonder and nevertheless part of a bigger universal plan, the monstrous body was interpreted as a manifestation of supernatural power and will. At the same time it was considered revealing, able to predict the future, as well as to be the most evident proof of the maternal imagination. The Greek etymology gives even more clues, it derives from the word *teras-teratos*, which has the double meaning of prodigy and demon and underlines the ambivalence of a meaning in between holy and secular, fascination and horror, fear and desire.

The combination of morbid curiosity and repulsion make up the attitude toward extra-ordinary bodies, the former always swinging between the opposite poles of fear and desire, the latter always belonging to more than one realm of being at once.

The fascination exercised by extra-ordinary bodies is more than evident throughout history. One of the first references we have to monstrous bodies are etched clay tablets describing more than sixty types of congenital deformities and their religious interpretation (Nineveh, 7th century BC). It is reported that since Babylonian times (2800 BC) a monstrous body was considered indeed a

sign of divine prodigy, a visible manifestation of the gods' supernatural power and will. Therefore, the monstrous body usually served for divination purposes, sacrificed and ritually examined (teratoscopy). Aristotle talks about *lusus naturae* (jokes of nature) and this seems to be an appropriate definition for bodies which, from the courts of Babylon to the Renaissance ones, from Elizabethan fairs to Barnum American circus, have had mainly to play the part of entertainers. In the course of history, though, the monstrous body ceased to be a sign of wonder and became a lucrative rarity to be displayed in order to provide widespread entertainment. In the Renaissance we find it in royal courts and popular fairs; during the Enlightenment the monstrous body becomes object of scientific probing, displayed in Cabinets of Curiosities, while retaining its mass appeal, luring crowds in street corners and taverns; in more recent times American circus side-shows such as the famous P.T. Barnum, started a fierce commercialisation of the monstrous body, which can be considered as an antedate of the motion-picture industry.

It is only since the Enlightenment that the extra-ordinary body become privileged object of investigation of the new-born scientific knowledge. Modalities of representation and interpretation consequently change, from what R. G Thomson calls narrative of wonder to a narrative of deviance³⁵ extraordinary embodiment ceases to be seen as a sign of prodigy, as a manifestation of the omnipotence of the cosmos, or as a possible map of human destiny to become instead abhorrent deviance from a norm that it contributes to establish itself, as the embodied sign of abnormality.

No wonder left, no portent: the extra-ordinariness becomes pathologised by the medical scientific discourse with its experiments and its politics of segregation. This shift unfolds from the Enlightenment, solidifies with the positivistic blind faith in objectivity and classification, and only recently its inconsistency gaps have been wedged enough to make the entire apparatus crumble. The obsession of science with taxonomy crashes in the attempt to classify what classifiable is not, what in terms of identity is a trouble: where do we position parameters of identity for "oddities" like Siamese twins? Or the hermaphrodite? Is it one or two? is it male or female?

Perhaps what we are witnessing here is another narrative shift to what nowadays we can call a narrative of difference. Or of self induced difference, even, as in the case of the Self-made Freak.

3.2. Extra-Ordinary as Grotesque

The combination of deformity and visibility condenses in physical features the unspeakable face of the abject, the prime terror of the other, and ultimately the body against which a culture comes to define its own criteria of normality as what is *not other*. The very core of a given society's values are elaborated through a binary system whose negative and oppositional pattern suffocates the free movement of life-affirming forces of free expenditure, excess and gratuitous exchange, all of which are embodied in the monstrous/grotesque body. Binarism as a defence mechanism, as a cultural attempt to hold at bay the de-stabilising forces of such a body, to annihilate difference in all its possible embodiments, a difference that must be persecuted because dangerously inspirational, threateningly subversive, potentially *of* orders disruptive. By inventing constantly different ways of representing the otherness, new definitions, unheard of names with which to label difference and reducing it to just another predictable sequence, a normative structure indexes specific embodiments of the other, calls them monsters and sets up killing machines to eliminate them.

De-termination, that is naming and identifying, becomes one with ex-termination. A parallel can be drawn between the extra-ordinary body and the grotesque within the grotesque realism theorised by M. Bakhtin in his account of carnival in early modern Europe. The connection is in the possible incarnations of the grotesque: the extraordinary body, by birth and by choice.

The grotesque body is always multiple and hyperbolic, constantly traversed by fluxes of the world and penetrated by its forces.

"It is always becoming, it is a mobile and hybrid creature, disproportionate, exorbitant, outgrowing all limits, obscenely decentred and off-balance, a figural and symbolic resource for parodic exaggeration and inversion"

P. Stallybrass, A. White³⁶

No wonder then that such a body, intended not as state but as a process, a body with no beginning and no end, chaotic, utterly rooted in the cyclicity of its own materiality, could be an appropriate model to think of extra-ordinary embodiment, insofar their bodily categories run parallel and overlap.

The most important point is that the grotesque body is interdependent from/with other bodies, from/with the entire world, they being and connecting with, the lived experience. This idea of interdependence laughs over the pretension

of a self-sufficient, autonomous self/body, detached, extirpated from its links; it goes against the bloated, inflated egomaniacal self trip, so taken by itself and so devoid of its osmotic pulse to forget to open to the world; it rejects the idea that boundaries must be preserved and policed³⁷

This is not a body as individual, self-replicating entity.

Rather, its multiple openings to, and its messy trafficking with otherness (other bodies, other worlds) seem to be the ultimate guarantee that its embodied difference will not get coached into in/difference. In other words, could it be perhaps that precisely what constitutes the mark of the *grotesqueness*, that is, its own excessive embodiment, would function as what prevents the reduction of the other to the same, the erosion of difference into an homogenised conformity, subjected to the rules of identity as replication of the self/same?

If this hypothesis proves to be correct, then the grotesque body model can definitely become another working tool for a reading of the links between extraordinary body and strategies of de/formation of identity.

In particular, it will confer to extra-ordinary bodies the power to show and disjoint the arbitrariness of boundaries invented and kept well policed to maintain separated skin and self, and of doing so by imposing with their very own presence a different way of seeing, a different epistemology of vision.

Hence the reasons for tracing a genealogy of the extra-ordinary/grotesque body up to its polymorphic contemporary embodiments. First, to let emerge and enlighten the shaping, etching and the scars of the processes of construction of the extraordinary body as otherness; secondly, to invent (and revel in) a new game in which the extraordinary body plays the joyful part of the joker, a role threats for those who like bombing others, a role that involves becoming a porous surface to rub with/against/along, and to be rubbed with/against/along. Rubbing away boundaries between one and the other. Exercising excoriation policies of skin friction to fracture the identity of categorical definitions.

This is the sense in which surface-,rubbing requires a different epistemological perspective to vision, one that can manage and accommodate a different idea of i-identity based upon an unconditional celebration of difference.

3.3. Extra-Ordinary Gaze

It is along this line that we define the extra-ordinary body as an embodiment of excess: ontologically borderline, it is the hinge which allows unthought-of openings. Living expression of a threshold state, the extra-ordinary body's mere

visibility is enough to disrupt a binary system unable to operate where there are forces of excess and perpetual change at play; forces that cannot be captured by the trap of fixed categories; forces whose unstoppable frictions erode slowly but steadily every stale dyadic structure of thinking. Untameable body, it makes visible in its own taxonomically incompatible corporeality the arbitrariness of binarism by forcing to question the category of otherness and its epistemological fundament.

The extra-ordinary body operates then as a social indicator, as a cultural litmus test, always in charge of disclosing a great deal of information about the viewer's attitudes, always greater than expected. Impossible not to look at, the extraordinary body's mere presence engages the other's gaze in a duel whose symbolic trophy would be the affirmation of one's own identity, individual and collective. What happens then when the monster gazes back? Yes, because the hybrid creature is among us to return the gaze, the dissecting, curious, terrified, inquiring gaze of those who are anxiously willing to exchange their fear of the otherness with the reassurance, however fictitious, of their own normality. Those who probe the weirdness of the extra-ordinary body from the self-styled safety of their superstitious certainties are in fact giving themselves away by exposing their inner beings to be distortedly, a-linearly mirrored in the eyes of the monster. Its stare has the power to break the mirror of self-reflection and sameness, the mirror where I mesmerisingly keep on identifying myself with my image reflected over there, establishing myself as disassociated, cut precisely in a half, a real one and a reflected image. The extraordinariness can break the spell of the mirror. This is what we see every time we look intently at an extraordinary embodiment, we let connections happen, we let ourselves to be inundated by the returned a-perspective gaze of extraordinary embodiment. Such a gaze is a de-mystifying one. It is a gaze that has the power to intercept and let emerge the cancerous cells of prejudice and fear.

Welcome to the self-made freak gaze.

4. The Self-Made Freak

The Self-Made Freak is a dream that is becoming reality. The *promise of cyborgs* is a self-fulfilling prophecy of incredible adaptation, survival and power. It is undeniable that we are witnessing a widespread interest in freakishness. Different bodies, born as such or made, seem to lurk from every not-so-hidden

corner of this millennial eve cultural landscape. *Zeitgeist* as a giant peep show? Evidence of what the *VICE Literary Supplement* has called "The Return of Abnormalcy"³⁹ is all around us, from the work of intellectuals like Haraway and her cyborgs, to body building obsessive competitors who refer to themselves as freaks; from academic and feminist theorist Grosz and her investigations in other corporealities to the Jim Rose Freak Circus Show and the spectacularisation of altered, manipulated bodies. Different bodies are featured more and more in both low and high culture, once again proving the arbitrariness of their distinction, they appear in advertising, they are the captivating subjects of fiction such as *Geek Love*⁴⁰, they are researched in a branch of cultural studies called Disability Studies, their in-your-face materiality questioned, probed, turned upside down, and conspicuously eroding every presumptions of normality. In fact, the very notion of normal body has come to be confronted by its own dark side, by its own otherness in all its unimagined multiple facets. The culture system of re/production of knowledge is facing the pitfalls of arbitrariness and is shaken at the fundamentals by the realisation that the other is us, and that the long term kingdom of the binary system which constructs a self as opposed to an other, *is* collapsing. As it is clear by now, every extra-ordinary embodiment constitutes a threat for the system and for what is taken to be normality as its shape relentlessly mutates. Its power is located precisely in its own connotated capacity to undergo processes of change and metamorphoses. If the revenge of the monster is close, then the Self-made Freak is herald of this revenge.

From here, I intend to propose a different approach to permanently altered bodies as the contemporary embodiment of the extra-ordinary, as one of the possible incarnations of the otherness. Exploratory theoretical tool will be the idea that it is somehow viable to view the permanently decorated body as a contemporary up-to-date version of the extra-ordinary, grotesque body I provisionally call the permanently decorated body hybrid body, bearing the marks of hybridizations.

4.1. Hybridization and Becoming

Hybrid is the result of a combination of different elements, even unrelated incongruous parts whose combination gives birth to the unexpected, to the potentially endless variations that we find in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, as well as in the Manchester of the future imagined by Jeff Noon in *Pollen*, where all the inhabitants are creatures resulting from the different combination of human,

vegetable, animal and shadow. Hybridizations: *ars combinatoria*, extra-ordinary chaos where no rule is the rule. Hybridizations: appropriate definition for bodies which contain ink and metal, mixed together with skin, blood and flesh. Bodies which are changing. Changing skin, changing gender, changing shape, form, dimensions, intentionally altering the perspective from which to perceive reality and be perceived by it.

Uncompromising otherness, fiercely stimulating force that pulls in more than one direction simultaneously, the hybrid creature simultaneously belong to more than one realm of being, forcing the viewer to question his/her own assumptions, what he/she considers to be knowledge. In so doing the hybrid creature's own presence is revealing, as it discloses the reality of the viewer's attitude in non-human politics more efficiently than anything else.

The hybrid creature speaks loudly about a metamorphoses of the body and of the mind. It heralds an ontological shift towards polymorphy, transformation, difference. It indicates new direction, new sensibility and attitude, based on the process of becoming rather than on the fact of being.

Different bodies claim for a different perspective and understanding, one that will not demand to know-it-all, nor to give definite answers, rather one that will learn different ways to ask questions. A perception and understanding which spring out of that liquidity-in-between where opposite tides merge one into the other, thus making impossible to pinpoint what belongs to whom. Dis-solution of boundaries of identity results. An identity which has to be considered as a process and not as a fact, as an embodiment of strategies of subversion and creativity, a body which is in the world, and at the same time is the world. A body in perpetual becoming actualisation of thought, the constant metamorphoses of forces of thought and forces of change.

"It is not a question of being (...), of attaining a definite status as a thing, a permanent fixture, nor of clinging to, having an identity, but of moving, changing, being swept beyond one singular position into a multiplicity of flows, (...): to liberate the myriad of flows, to proliferate connections, to intensify."

E.Grosz⁴¹

The process of becoming something other in relation to the permanently decorated body refers to the exquisite and more often than not excruciatingly painful procedure by which a given body is transformed into another one.

We can imagine this process of self induced transformation as a kind of act of

pure magic, if by magic we intend a system of compensation which redresses previously lost balances and works towards self-preservation and healing. In this sense, performing an action of body modification which is bound to affect permanently one's corporeality is very much like casting a spell to themselves. It is a self cast spell which distillates a raw vision into the substantiation of the real bodily experience, and acts as alchemic operator of change driven relentlessly by the tidal force of desire.

4.2. The Self-Made Freak Desire

"The sites most intensely invested in desire always occur at a conjunction, an interruption, a point of machine connection, always surface effects, between one thing and another between a hand and a breast, a tongue and a cunt, a mouth and food, a nose and a rose."

E.Grosz⁴²

This hybrid body is a body whose parts are invested in selective manner, so to become corporeal sites charged with libidinal intensities. The resulting planes, or levels, create constantly fluctuating linkages devoid of any internal hierarchy or fixed structure. Rather, they seem to follow as only rule the idea of transmutation, impulses and free circulating randomised energy.

They follow as their only rule the generating force of desire, the same very force which pulsates in the hybrid body. The embodiment of the Self-made Freak is a visible manifestation of desire. A desire so intense to become flesh and blood, to become incarnated.

To consider the body in these terms means to emphasise the role played by desire in the shaping of reality and in the production and communication of meaning; most relevant for the analysis of bodies which choose deliberately, thus for the pure delicious superfluity to the general economy of the bare necessities, to undergo a process of radical transformation.

"(...) desire (...) is a mode of surface contact with things and substances, with a world, that engenders and induces transformations, intensifications, a becoming something other. Not simply a rise and fall, a waxing and waning, but movement, processes, transmutations. That is what constitutes the appeal and power of desire, its capacity to shake up, rearrange, reorganise the body's forms and sensations, to make the subject

and body as such dissolve into something else, something other than what they are habitually (...) Desire (...) may end (...) in the production of sensations never felt, alignments never thought, energies never tapped, regions never known."

E.Grosz⁴³

Desire is always already there. It pre-exists the body, it pre-exists especially contextual definitions of bodily reality. Desire is already there, ready to be unleashed, diffused, perpetrated, through the appropriate vectors, implements and tools that can operate on the body reconfiguring its territory, remapping orifices, interstices, openings and closures, creases and folds, redesigning temporarily and/or permanently surfaces by heavily charging them with intensities of liberating flows; such surfaces free to interact with each other, free to connect, to establish previously unthought of, unheard of, unseen linkages with other surfaces, whose effects are bound to emanate a proliferation of pure distilled desire/able molecules in perpetual mutual dis/connection. Desire is produced and liberated as cause and simultaneously the effects of a conjoining parts.

Desire is already there.

At the intersection point.

Where the needle meets the flesh.

Where ink meets blood.

Where metal meets the bone.

4.3. Marked/Mapped Skin

To mark one's skin is excessive and contagious.

Excessive as it induces a proliferation of intensities, an expansion of surfaces that feel by connecting, intersecting, overlapping and skimming with other surfaces, themselves expanded, prone to open and be opened in an unstoppable flux of flowing, incarnated desire. Just desire, with no declination whatsoever, primeval force that sweeps away stagnation of compressed energies, releasing them from the drive of foreclosure and setting them free to leave their trace, chaotic imprinting of randomised and fragmented paths which emerges as tactile relief on marked/mapped skin.

A skin that becomes a map, a blind cartography of possibilities.

To mark one's skin is to produce excess and contagion.

Contagion as the generated expansion of bodily surfaces allows and increases the possibility of otherwise unlikely linkages, of a spreading infection which

unfolds and flourishes in devastatingly beautiful ways.

It is precisely the unexpected link with other surfaces which generates the atomic wonder of an interstice, of a fold, of a crease; which creates in-between territories whose borders are not decipherable and where hyphenation forces are at display; which produces the inter/space where contamination of boundaries is at work; which engenders the boundless territory where nothing fits into a prefixed structure.

The self-made freak happily rejects the ownership of a fixed identity, nor does s/he require a tribe to belong to, to soothe nocturnal identity anxieties. S/he rather dwells in an indecipherable borderline state, both within and without the boundaries of the structure, perpetually finding a ford, and if the ford is not there, relentlessly inventing it, a ford extolling and celebrating the power of the margin.

Liquid liminal surviving, liquid like the language that translates into discernible words the ceaselessly unfolding fluctuation of body matter.

Liquid liminal identities, liquid like the interface contr/addiction ...

The power of self-induced transformation proves that the attempt to impose a name to diversity had failed together with the collapse of the binary century.

The self-made freak does not accept the limits imposed by exterminative determination, resists to be given a name, and thus executed.

5. REFLECTIONS ON SURFACE⁴⁴

5.1. Hooking the Flesh

This is a body where orifices proliferate.

One at the time, one after another, twenty needles pierce the body. Twenty hooks are fitted, penetrating the skin under which raw flesh is waiting to burst open, to be opened up, pierced, hooked.

Over this suspended body, a floating essence of gravity arrested into space, new forms are taking shape, shapes of emerging and loose desiring energies.

What happens when the body is operated upon, incised and possessed by a controlled and strangely sterile fury that opens up points of contact with the world? What happens when this fury unlocks permanently free zones of friction from which desire can erupt and flow? Such a taking-over force keeps on ceaselessly ploughing the skin of a body that is no longer organic and functional, a body whose matter expands and overflows in the process of being re-moulded

according to different instances.

The opening, the flow of desire. The opening of new apertures in the body makes the body float in absence of gravity, suspended from its own skin and from its own flesh, reaching into its own still foreign extensions. Extensions of this body are the hooks, the ropes, and the fine, vibrating tension which holds the body itself. Hooks, ropes, and intensity are all expansions of body surfaces and of energies that are already there, whose roaring laughter pours in a proliferation of outwards into inwards, an uncoiling or inwards into outwards, a reciprocal vomiting that dissolves into white fumes the barrier between in and out, making them lose their codified meaning. They are all segments of expanding energy that radiates into planes intersecting and cutting each other like fragments of ice glass.

The action of fabricating and installing new openings in the body unleashes such a pro-life-ration, and the free-floating in space and time makes the body to become one with space and time itself.

The suspended body is the sum of a potential of multiplicities that are being actualised by intense pallid and traumatic discipline, and that are triggered into place by the focus on the interland between pleasure and pain, where no feeling owns a name, nor the name itself exists yet to be told.

Surfaces are extended by the physical stretching of an Operation which, acting on pliable body matter by intervention and active relocation of functions, becomes the vector of unlimited change.

Surfaces are extended by the pulling and the pushing, whose violence dilates flesh into space and makes it explode over space's multiple circuitual unfoldings, and the body, there, up above and beneath, there it rides, along the icy crest of a wave of delicious gratuity. The hooks in-there to remind and to reclaim flesh territory, a territory for flesh to reestablish its domain and its own very existence, this flesh to remind of the present of existence, this lacerated skin to remind of the existence of a present.

This is the remainder. That flesh, new, ancient, circular flesh, is present, always and whenever. That flesh is the incorruptible present, the present to give to your thirsty mind. That present is a gift. Flesh gift. Bones gift. Skin gift.

Skin is stretched over the fold, over the gap as a chaotomic interface: it is stretched over the interstice, over the orifice, over the artifice as the authentic legacy of the bones beneath; it is stretched as a multiple variable with no random access in progressive expansion. perpetually shedding.

Membrane to lacerate with your teeth, permeable surface to rip with your nails.

to divaricate and probe furiously, this skin becomes a rubbing of opposite porosities, of electromagnetic stimulations, of short circuital diffractions, of cruel intensities.

Skin that sheds skin, piercing and stretching its own thin accommodating envelope, the wall of this home that corpophobia still calls inside, scarred surface over which the line impressed by the time is neutralisation of inertia: the crease is the mark left by the giant wheel of change, the cosmic rubber stamping, the ultimate trick of the next Armageddon

5.2. Sewing the Mouth

Above the immobile face hands are interlacing in a dance that becomes the weaving of another body. The unpronounceable sounds of un-heard-of words is woven into and through the body, braiding in the incorruptible meaning of pre-wording matter. Hands, dancing and quickly, stitch the mouth up.

Forcing the mouth shut, they decree the point where the end and the beginning of the word are to coincide, the instance when the end and the beginning of nourishment meet. The access of the world and to the world is stopped, the oozing of the world is blocked. As words do not gush out, so the world does not penetrate: the reciprocal exchange is arrested by swiftly suturing hands that embroider the lips with a new bar(ring) code.

The suture that forecloses the mouth sends the organic structure of the body into a frantic short circuit; it induces the collapse of the integrate functioning of the system; it instigates an insubordination within the ranks of the management apparatus' priori Lies, monitoring, efficiency.

The need of eating, of speaking. .) is revealed as non-irreducible option.

Cautiously, other new modalities advance, they must.

They advance to disengage the organ from its own function.

Through the suture, the organ is prevented from its normal and predictable functioning, that one that the organ is arranged and organised for, and therefore ceases to be an organ. Its own very belonging to an organic system is compromised by the collapse of such a system, which is falling apart because one of its components is no longer available, having been replaced by an uncontrollable drifting of positively viral proliferations.

Mouth sewing, thread weaving, web spinning, surgical stitching.

The mouth is being closed by the opening of new orifices through which a weaving of surgical black threads finds its way. The mouth is thus forced to not

to talk, to not to eat. Forced to abandon and postpone its organic apparatus' activities by an induced displacement of functional directions.

Organ that organ is no more.

Un-organised, what a mouth can do?

It can move on to searching, inducing and enjoying another not-thought-of-yet role.

De-organised what a sown up mouth can do?

For this organic-no-more selection of possibilities there are explorations to make, but not before having lingered and revelled long enough in this strangely liquid no-one's land in between skies.

Closure of the mouth=opening of non-organic event.

Thus, gesture/event of closing=gesture/event of opening.

We are working on the barrier. We are working on this barrier.

Rather than the opposite polarities we want to see and play with what there is in between on/off. Rather than concentrate on *ON* or on *OFF* we happily see the *!(dash)* in between. This dash is the process, it is the mark that signals the process of becoming and ignores the state of being, it is the mark of when the process is taking place, of when the barriers become liquid.

5.3. Mark of Desire

Permanently mark your body and you will make your body change.

This *is* a body that does not stay still.

Molecular matter in constant movement, intersection of powerful forces, pure flux, this body allows the tide of transformation to sweep along its edges and to make them even more liquid. The liquid disposable pleasure of licking away particles of yet to know beautifully toxic fluid wastes just happens to irradiate from the area where land and water meet.

This is interface-land, the land where membrane-like entities reproduce themselves by simply shedding layers after layers of skin.

In between inner and outer, there it is, skin.

Permanently mark your skin and something is bound to happen.

Flay your skin to reveal an/other layer of the same substance, only more vital.

Creation of openings in the skin is the opening to the other. No longer barrier between inside and outside when you perforate it. No longer the place where the discourse of interiority faces a discourse of exteriority. No longer inside Vs surface. Every cut in this surface, every needle that pierces this surface, every incision that etches this surface is an opening to the other. The mark of desire

of the other. Promise of an offering, display of vulnerability the presumes utter acceptance of the unpredictable event, the random variation dis/course.

Mark your skin to inscribe your difference.

A difference that germinates from the combination of will power and infinite repetition: strategy and technology of repetition lead to (beyond the speakable bodily events.

Such a practice channels a flux of knowledge by embodiment. Such a practice transmits the information of change and it loads the software by embodiment. Or rather, it is like DNA. pure self replicating information that penetrates, before being articulate into recognisable signs, and infiltrates cells as the viral vector of random mutation. Its DNA commands infinite self-replication. It carries the information. Thus, knowledge is transmitted. Openings in the skin let the virus of transformation in. Openings in the skin create the condition by which it is possible to elaborate a new epistemology based on the constant mutating articulation of vision. Change the surface and a new vision will follow.

Put a mark on your skin.

5.4. Skin of Desire

Knowledge's appointed device has been a tree shaped vision machine whose branches reach out and suffocate the essence of things with the morsel of one definition of otherness. This categorisation machine uses the primacy of vision as its more malleable tool to fix into stableness the iridescent skin of the surface. Such a machine of categorisation is based on a surface intended as the barrier between oppositional polarities: inside and outside, self and other, white and black.

The traditional view of the skin as seen and represented by medicine, science and culture fulfils perfectly the role of the necessary membrane that by separating inner and outer, becomes fundamental to the definition of the self as something established as different from everything that is non-self.

Thus, skin is traditionally perceived as the boundary between the self and the world. But skin is also the screen where life itself projects experiences which, in turn, leave behind them a trail of lines, wrinkles, scars, creases, thickenings, calluses, moles, birthmarks, and what else, the very embodiment of one's life paths. Skin is also the ultimate mirror, endless reflecting the other; skin is the shell onto which marks are being perpetually engraved, it is the canvas to decorate, to drawn upon, to paint, to pierce, to write on, to infinitely manipulate.

Traces, inscriptions, scars, depressions, hollows, ridges on the body are the body eventful and mnemonic make up. Residues, impressions of the passage of the world through the body, these cuts and marks are the body insofar they are writing being written on the body, as if the world was casting paste and the body the cast. Thus the exigency of inspecting the surface of the body as the location of a meaning of the body otherwise invisible to the body itself.

But there is more to skin: perforating, cutting, penetrating, marking the skin does not in itself breach the boundary between skin and the world because such a boundary has been already shifted by the practise and the discourse of the self marking gesture. Decoration of the skin is precisely what allows the body to become the agent of a mediation between spiritual and material world, a mediation written on the interface layer of the skin, a mediation that makes the sharp edges of oppositions to be smeared and to fluctuate. Thus, any binarism loses value. Embedded in the very etymology of the word cosmetic: from *kosmos* and *ethic*, the art of decorating by creating harmony in the cosmos.

5.5. Orifices of Desire

As we have seen, the skin has been considered the barrier separating inside from outside, self and other, interior and exterior, thus being established as the all encompassing metaphor of the separative membrane (and what more powerful metaphor of the sublime membrane, the most idealised and loaded with disciplinary burden, the hymen? the closed opening that most exquisitely has been used to preserve, contain and define the discourse of gender as means of subjection).

So it is time to re-appropriate and distort the power of this metaphor.

Let's talk of technologies of self defloration, how to get rid of your own membrane, altering the meaning of the hymen, denouncing the imposed state of distinction between inside and outside and making it again porosity, filter, osmotic passage.

It is precisely because of skin's ontologically ambivalent status that action on the skin is so pregnant with the consequences for the idea and the reality of subjectivity, or better for the narrative and the practice of subjectivity.

I get from Lacan⁴⁵ the image of a subject whose modality of experiencing subjectivity is in constant turbulence. A turbulent self, encased within the trap of a specular dimension, soon realises that the only way of escaping such a trap is thorough the orifices of the body, corporeally not-specular because of their

status of passages. Thus, cuts and openings, that own no alterity, for this very reason are the "stuff, or rather the lining" of what one takes to consider subjectivity, the conscious subject. Through openings of the body the subject emerges onto the surface, the interiority becomes exteriorised, the self opens to the other. And this game is played on the skin.

A skin that paradoxically serves the role of encasing the self, hiding it from visible view and apprehension, and at the same time, *as* a surface, it is precisely the place where the only visible traces of the self are readable. On the skin, interiority and exteriority fight, opposite discourses, each one engaged in to the colonisation of the other. By perforating the skin new possibilities of negotiation are given, by perforating the surface skin is no longer boundary, interiority and exteriority dance for the first time together until they merge...and fuck.

Hence the crucial role that orifices politics, policies and playings have in the process of construction of identity and subjectivity. Being passages not by definition, but by embodiment, they exist prior to the establishment of the notions of inside and outside.

It is their threshold states that, rather, has been used to produce the distorted vision of two separate hemispheres, while, really, it is more the case of an inflatable balloon, rhythmically pumped and deflated by the force of indecipherable rhythms.

These orifices (cuts or gaps in the surface, lips, tip of penis, vagina, the anus...) are skin's folded interruptions, they are the sites where inside and outside cannot be de-terminated, they are the spaces in between whose reality questions the very concept of body boundaries, in the same moment in which their embodiment produces a sense of *bodyedges*. Ambiguous viral agents of derangement, they have been forced to become crucial to the definition of self based on the idea of self = that is not non-self.

As a result, any form of de-termination must be a coercive ex-termination of multiplicities.

Patrolling of these areas in the form of extensive ruling of their organic functions is strict and their handling subjected in great detail to regulations. Emission, excretion, secretion are dangerous borderline activities, where the body is at its own primarily instinctive and self regulating entity; and bodily fluids are thus regarded culturally as dangerous and submitted to interdictions, rules and prescriptions.

The trafficking of the monstrous substances within must be regimented to control their swerving and their instability. Their organic status preserved and replicated.

The danger they embody controlled. And their danger lies in the way orifices, while defining by interruption what is perceived to be the *bodyedges*, are simultaneously the areas where more condensed it is the erotogenic impulse of desire.

Anatomical margins are the channels through which desire proliferates and moves, unfurling across vectors that are open on both sides, towards the inside (self) and towards the outside (other).

Anatomical margins are the channels where desire for the other flows and ridges.

They are the embodied marks of the desire of the other.

Orificial openings are the threshold that separates organic and non-organic insofar they are usually associated with an organic function (mouth=eating asshole=defecating ...). but they are also capable of being invested by other waves of pleasure when and if disassociated from their organic functions.

The addition of non-organic openings to the body manifests itself as an addiction to multiple links inducing practices.

5.6. Skin Shedding Machines

Subversive management of the skin implies a re-surfacing by additional orificial vectors. Technologies of skin shedding cautiously and deliberately subvert the sense of identity and subjectivity by letting expand and proliferate the skin/surface's possibilities of contacts, friction and rubbing.

Penetrate, mark and pierce the surface/skin and you will obtain a proliferation of new surfaces. Each of them, in turn, will trigger and chaotically articulate a shift in vision and perception. In fact, any change in the surface/skin is bound to affect the capacity of vision, the ways of seeing, visualising and perceiving.

A self-inflicted surface/skin action will precisely modify the surface which first collects the sight, the very first surface that the eye encounters in its journey into space.

Difference bounces back, triggered by the repetitive marks which dis-organise and multiply the surface. Surface affected by self-inflicted modification denounces its status as no longer borderline, no longer separation between inside and outside. Rather, it becomes the unbounded space where interiority reverses outwards, and exteriority reverses inwards. Hence its power.

Difference bounces back as the result of will power and repetitions, which both prefigure a mapped, operative, working act on the self/body by which it becomes possible to achieve change and transfiguration.

Mark your skin/surface, the territory where your self/body's outer layers thicken, contract and release rhythmically and randomly in reciprocated relation with what we define outside world, the territory whose outer layers interfere, overlap, mingle and merge with what we used to call skin.

Mark your skin and come to embody fully the operative strategy (refrain) that in first place allowed such a task.

Centrality of the vision in the probing of the skin. skin as the first and foremost object of vision, as the visible manifestation of an embodied reality. Utterly and unavoidably visible, the skin is always the surface of sight-friction when the eyes are scanning the space. Totally and unavoidably visible, the skin pre-exists the vision, and it seems to presuppose it.

The primacy of sight in constructing otherness and its predominance among all the senses, it reduces bodies to their mere exteriorities. But seeing the other does not have to mean reducing it to an object, rather it means apprehending it as form, a subject recognised by another subject in virtue of its recognisable surface/skin. A true meeting of independent creatures.

This is circular vision, which, like circular breathing, is there to disrupt the culturally assumed and imposed border between one sense and the other, one realm of being and another. Classification maniacs have struggled to impose the sterilising patterns of taxonomy, have struggled to find a place for everything as well as a name for every place. But this is circular vision, pre-vision, something that occurs before vision, or instead of vision?)

Skin is not anymore the visible barrier between inside and outside because we cannot agree any longer on the definition of inside and outside.

Where does one start and the other ends?

The very core of the notion of inside/outside is being revolutionised by an altogether different perspective to look at the way we look at things and by an altogether different language still to be invented to describe them.

As long as borderline cells are happily fucking, of course.

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Betti Marenko

Notes

1. B.MASSUMI, foreword in G.DELEUZE, F.GUATTARI, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1987 xiii
2. In relation to Spinoza's interpretation of the body see E.GROSZ, *Volatile bodies*, Bloomington and Indianapolis, Indiana University Press, 1994, p11
3. Ibidem, p 124
4. cfr. RDIPROSE, *The bodies of women. Ethics, embodiment and sexual difference*, London, Routledge, 1994, pp82-93
5. This set of ideas seem to me to be relevant to an exploration of Lbeskin as the place where body marking takes place: there are no better areas upon which to act to produce difference than those that are strictly policed, those body zones subjected to control and guidance.
6. R.BRAIDOIT, "Degli insetti e delle donne. Irigaray e Deleuze sul divenire-donna" in *Il secolo deleuziano*, Eterotopie, Mimesis, 1998, p78
7. cfr. R.DIPROSE, "A 'genethics' that makes sense" in *Cartographies: poststructuralism and the mappings of bodies and spaces*, R.Diprose, R.Ferrell eds, Sydney, Allen & Unwin, 1993, pp65-76
8. cfr. E.GROSZ, *Volatile bodies*, op cit, pp145-159
9. cfr. ibidem, pp160-183
10. cfr. E.GROSZ, *Space, time and perversion*, London, Routledge, 1995, p130
11. Body without organs do not define only human ones, they can be animal, vegetal, mineral, textual, social, cultural, physical, animate, inanimate...
12. cfr. G.LYNN, "Body Matters" in *The Body. Journal of philosophy and the visual arts*, A.Benjamin ed, London, Academy Group, 1993, pp61-69
13. K.DAVIS, "Embodiment theory" in K.DAVIS ed. *Embodied practises. Feminist perspectives on the body*, London, Sage, 1997 p13
14. I am indebted to my friend Margot L. Butler whose research on visual epistemology has been topic of many inspiring conversations
15. D.HARAWAY, *Modest_Witness@Second_Millennium. FemaleManli Meets_OncoMousetJ*, Routledge, New York and London, 1997 p11
16. Ibidem, p16.
17. While extra-ordinary bodies by birth refer to physical deformity/monstrosity, extra ordinary bodies by choice refer instead to those who decide to undergo practises of radical, permanent body alteration, in particular decorative body practises, or body adornment
18. Because of the nature and scope of this paper, and given the fact that it is a work in progress I will not be able to expand all the reference mentioned here.
19. D.HARAWAY, *Simians, cyborgs and women. The reinvention of nature*, London, Free Association Books, 1991, p180
20. Ibidem, p180
21. Ibidem, p178
22. Catastrophe and Chaos theories can be considered as mappings of dissipative systems which chart movement of energies and their potential of de-stabilisation, like in the classic example of the butterfly flapping's wings inducing an hurricane in the other side of the world.

23. cfr. C.BATTERSBY "Her body/Her boundaries. Gender and the metaphysics of containment" in *The Body. Journal of philosophy and the visual arts*, op cit, pp31-39
24. Ibidem. I refer here to the work of mathematician H. Poincare at the beginning of this century
25. cfr. T.Flynn, *The body in sculpture*, London, The Everyman Art Library, 1998, pp 56-57
26. cfr. G.LYNN, op cit, p68
27. cfr. C.BATTERSBY, op cit, p36
28. The topic of alternative vision cannot possibly be properly explored in this paper. However, see in bibliography: T.Brennan, M.Jay eds, op.cit, M.Jay, op.cit., L.Taylor, op.cit.
29. cfr. E.GROSZ, *Volatile bodies*, op cit, pp138-159
30. cfr. ibidem, xii
31. D.HARAWAY, *Modest_Witness*, op cit, p45
32. Sensuous scholarship implies a critical awareness of the senses, an attentiveness to the voice, a recognition of the political implications of research work, cfr. PSTOLLER, *Sensuous scholarship*, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997, p34
33. In using this term I explicitly refer to the work of Rosemarie Garland Thomson whose seminal research on freaks and extraordinary embodiment I use diffusely in my research.
34. cfr. R.G.THOMSON, *Extraordinary bodies. Figuring physical disability in American culture and literature*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1997 pp8-9
35. cfr. R.G.THOMSON ed., *Freakery. Cultural spectacles of the extraordinary body*, New York, New York University Press, 1996, pp1-19
36. P.S TALLYBRASS, A.WHITE eds, *The politics and poetics of transgression*, Ithaca, New York, Cornell University Press, 1986, p9
37. cfr. A.PONZIO, *Elogio dell'infimiorale. Critica dell'ideologia della produttività* Roma, Castelvecchi, 1997, pp41-45
38. cfr. D.HARAWAY "The promise of monsters: a regenerative politics for inappropriate/ot others" in L.Grossberg, C.Nelson, P.Treichler, eds, *Cultural Studies*, New York and London, Routledge, 1992
39. cfr. M.DERY, "Freak Chic" in *Voice Literary Supplement*, April/May 98
40. K.DUNN, *Geek love*, New York, Warner, 1989. This novel traces the story of a circus family whose freak children are all the sought-after result of experiments with various drugs, and it is narrated by the freak embodied point of view of a hunched, albino dwarf.
41. E.GROSZ, *Space, time and perversion*, op cit, p184
42. Ibidem p182
43. Ibidem p204-205
44. A mouth sewing performance and a ritual full body suspension in which both I took part as piercing assistant are the events that triggered and inspired the following reflections. (Full body ritual suspension, *Torture Garden*, London, 7.12.98 Mouth sewing performance, London, 6.11.98. Heartful thanks to Paulo, Mark, Ricki, Stuart)
45. cfr. J.LACAN, *Ecrits*, London, Tavistock, 1977

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